

Video Recommendations for Lamorinda Idol Singers
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This memorandum is a sequel to the memorandum entitled, "How to Make Singing Videos" which is available on the Lamorinda Arts council website.

There are two distinct approaches to making singing videos. The first involves audition videos, the second, entertainment videos.

Audition Videos

Audition videos are common for theatrical productions and college entrance applications. The objective of these videos is primarily to display vocal capability, and, secondarily, to show performance skills.

It is very important in these audition videos to follow directions precisely regarding slating, song selection, close-up or distance shots, and accompaniment.

It is critical to have the best possible sound. This involves using a quality mic, proper distancing from the mic and recording in a room with good sound qualities. If the sound is too lively or too dead, it is often due to the acoustics of the room in which the recording was made.

In general it is not appropriate to use any sounds alterations such as EQ, compression, and effects for audition videos. Some auditions are extremely strict in this regard, others less so. In that case, minor adjustments that do not fundamentally alter the sound might be OK. For example, common EQ adjustments are using low pass and high pass filters which reduce rumble and hiss. Also, a very small amount of reverb might be added to round out the sound. Adjustments can be made using a quality mixer or software such as Audacity.

Along with a good mic, the companion music should sound good and be well balanced with the vocals. Using a mixer is the convenient way to assure the balance desired. Using a mixer also will provide the option of using a monitor. Having a nearby monitor playing the back-up music helps the singer hear the music clearly and promptly, which helps with pitch and timing.

For audition videos, shooting the video while lip synching to the pre-recorded vocals is not appropriate. However, the sound can be recorded by a quality sound system to make the audio track while simultaneously shooting the video. Then, using film editing software, the audio and video can be combined. Since they were made at the same time the synch should line up exactly.

Proper lighting of course is important, but it should be fairly basic for audition videos. The backdrop should also be simple, such as a plain white wall.

Entertainment Videos

Entertainment videos do not have the strict constraints of audition videos. Suddenly there is freedom – both with respect to sound as well as the other aspects of the video.

How to get the best sound? While in the audition videos you may not have wanted to have the mic in view, now you can choose to have the mic up close, to get an intimate sound.

Now you can use all the capabilities for adjusting sound. Using EQ, you may want to raise or lower certain frequencies, in addition to using the high and low filters.

Compression is an adjustment that reduces the volume of high volumes. A super belt will still sound forceful, but will not overload the sound system, which may cause distortion.

High quality mixers typically have many built in effects, with each effect having its own adjustments. It is an art to know which of these to use. For the *Live at the Orinda!* performances, we typically use a blend of several effects. In addition, during certain sections of a song, the reverb is increased for dramatic effect.

Not to be used under any circumstances is Autotune, which corrects pitch errors.

Lighting can be made more interesting using colored lights, special lighting effects, changes in the lighting throughout the video, spotlights, etc.

When deciding the overall design of the video, there are two categories: videos designed to support the singer's storytelling, message, or emotion; and videos that add an extra layer of artistry or fun.

In the first category the video design choices should be made against the backdrop of the question: Does this add to the impact of the song, or, is it a distraction?

Some of the choices might be alternating close-up and distance shots, shooting from different angles, shooting with props, shooting with action, incorporating dancers and musicians, and using split screens. Sometimes the best choice is keeping it simple.

A drawback for some of these choices is that they require laying down an audio track and then filming while singing along with the soundtrack. The danger here is that if the lip synching is noticeable, the video lacks sincerity. Sometimes you see singers with elaborate videos not singing at all in sections. This too can be effective.

Lucy Clearwater, a past Lamorinda Idol winner and now a professional singer/songwriter, filmed her original song, "Lost and Found", while accompanying herself on the guitar. She then gave the video to a friend who created four instrumental parts, making videos of himself playing each along with Lucy's track. They were all then combined in the final video. These steps both enhanced the sound and added interest to the video. It can be seen at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OVCNtwGCqBE>.

Further techniques can be used which allows the video to become an art form of its own, or just add fun to it. Many MTV videos are beautiful to watch, and the song lyrics almost become secondary. Some are pure fun, such as Meghan Trainor's, "It's all about the Bass" video. It can be seen at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7PCkvCPvDXk&list=RD7PCkvCPvDXk&start_radio=1.

Conclusion

What is the best approach to making a video? Clearly there is a range of options. Now, with the quality audio and video capabilities of the iPhone coupled with inexpensive editing software, it is within the grasp of everyone to make quality videos. The best results will come from learning video making skills and then being thoughtful and creative in making the video choices that is in best keeping with your objectives.

For Lamorinda Idol, we have not set forth any constraints on how videos are made. However, judges are advised to ignore the quality of the videos in making their decisions, in order to provide a level playing field for the competition. Still, participants are encouraged to experiment and have fun making their videos.